



Springfield-Greene County
Health Department
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From the Office of the Director of Health

Health Department Expands Services to Gulf Coast Evacuees

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department expands its daily operations and services to care for evacuees from the gulf coast area. Evacuees may enroll in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, obtain immunizations and receive care at the HIV, STD, TB and pregnancy testing clinics.

“Our hearts ache for the victims of this disaster,” says director Kevin Gipson. “Our staff is committed to opening our programs to the evacuees and to providing them the public health care they need, while continuing to maintain our daily operations for the citizens in our community.”

While hurricane response and recovery is not something the health department specifically trains for, preparation for other public health emergencies allowed the department to quickly transition to this type of response. After the 9-11 terrorist attacks federal grant monies provided to the health department through the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services allowed the department to hire seven employees dedicated to public health emergency preparedness and response.

“The efforts we’ve put into preparing for bioterrorism have allowed us to strengthen our response to any public health emergency,” Gipson adds. “Whether we’re dealing with a food borne illness outbreak, a flu vaccination shortage or hurricane relief, our staff is trained in how to respond quickly, efficiently and compassionately in order to protect public health.”

The department’s emergency planner is now acting liaison for public health stationed at the American Red Cross’ hurricane relief service center. Staff nurses are providing tetanus shots for evacuees at the center. In addition, twelve of the department’s environmental staff have volunteered to travel to the disaster area to help with sewage system, water and food inspections as requested.

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